



Ron C. Cross

FROM THE HEART...

*By Ron C. Cross,
Board of Commission Chairman*

Summer is winding down and school has started, the primary and runoff elections are over, hopefully no more phone interruptions while you are attempting to relax or eat dinner, and business continues in the County as usual. Well almost...

One of the most difficult situations that a public official faces is when there is something that you believe, without a doubt, is best for the County but is misunderstood by the general public and heavily criticized by a vocal minority. Such is the issue of consolidation - or rather incorporation and consolidation. Once the three-mile buffer requirement was removed by the legislators in 2005, we assumed that it would be fairly easy to get the issue on the ballot for the citizens to decide since all previous studies had indicated that consolidation was very beneficial for the County and the Cities, and previous commissions had favored this change. However, for whatever reasons, our legislative delegation did not honor our request to have this placed before the voters in November of this year.

Part of the benefits of consolidation was the receiving of some \$5 million in franchise fees which we felt would finance many critical capital needs in the County. These fees would come at a very minimal cost to utility users. Since this is not possible at this time, the Commission has voted unanimously to place a bond issue referendum before you in November. These forty-two projects totaling almost \$42 million are drastically needed by the County and would result in a tax increase of one mill. This amounts to about \$40 for every \$100,000 of property value. We support this option and ask for your assistance in its passage. I encourage you to attend the upcoming "Town Hall Meetings" to receive all the information about this proposal.

Although incorporation/consolidation was viewed as a negative during my recent campaign for re-election, I have not changed my opinion on the issue. The incorporation of a portion of the County and immediate consolidation with the remainder of the County is, by far, the best thing that can happen to Columbia County. There are simply no disadvantages to this program, and many advantages in addition to financial. Since we are not combining two existing, operating governments, we face none of the problems of Richmond County and other counties. It would lower property taxes and prevent needless duplication of government services in the future. Fulton County near Atlanta now has five new cities and several others are proposed which is resulting in needless duplication of services and more costly government. The Commission firmly believes that once the public has time to consider the options fully, they will agree that consolidation has many advantages such as ensuring a streamlined government and no disadvantages since the government and constitutional officers will remain the same as well as the number of county employees.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you again as Chairman of the County Commission. I pledge to continue to present items to you that we feel will benefit the overall County. If we should be successful in getting you the right to vote on consolidation in the future - and you vote favorably - we propose to offset the cost of this bond program with the franchise fees and, thereby, deleting the proposed 1 mill increase to your property taxes. I just feel that, as always, Columbia County citizens understand the concept of a community and the need to ensure that all areas of the County continue to thrive and wisely dismiss narrow-minded viewpoints and negative murmurings that disparage continued growth and success of the County.



TIME CAPSULE

Can you imagine what the County will be like in 100 years? Won't future citizens be fascinated to learn about the County's rich heritage! It is difficult to capture a moment in time in such a multi-faceted community, but that is the challenge of this time capsule project.

The County is seeking input from its citizens, schools, and businesses for items such as pictures, family histories, small artifacts (or pictures of the artifacts) with an accompanying explanation. Family heirlooms will be photographed and returned, if necessary.

The time capsule will be buried in the Memorial Gardens behind the new library and will be opened in 100 years. Selected items will be displayed in the lobby of the library/performing arts center for public viewing before being put into the time capsule.

Please send your items and ideas to Marilyn Heuer at P.O. Box 498, Evans, GA 30809; by e-mail at mheuer@columbiacountyga.gov; or phone at 706-868-3359.



Wade Padgett

TEENAGE YEARS 101

When does a youthful indiscretion become a legal issue? In our litigious society, it is sooner than you think! Spend an evening with the Magistrate Court Judge and find out the realities of teenage drinking, drugs, reckless driving, and sex and the legal system. Two classes of Teenage Years 101 will be presented in the Performing Arts Center (next to the library) at 720 N. Belair Road at 7:00 PM. The first evening – Tuesday, September 12th - is for parents, grandparents, teachers, and anyone who is interested. The second evening – Tuesday, September 29th - is reserved for teenaged youth only. This will be a factual, caring, and honest discussion.

REED CREEK PARK WETLAND INTERPRETIVE CENTER OPENS FALL 2006

Calling all Volunteers!

The Wetlands Interpretive Park facility at Reed Creek Park will host indoor and outdoor educational opportunities relating to natural resource conservation and management. It will qualify for the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification through its use of energy conservation building materials and will serve as a demonstration of design excellence with low environmental impact.



The facility will be the volunteer headquarters for Adopt-a Stream and Adopt-a-Highway programs, recycling education, school field trip outings, and educational workshops for County Extension Master gardeners and 4-H activities. The building will also be available as a rental facility for civic clubs, professional organizations, and special event functions. Retired educators and science-oriented volunteers are currently being solicited to conduct workshops and school field trips and to serve as docents at the park facility. Please call 706-868-3484 for more information.

GRANTS TO HELP MARKET COLUMBIA COUNTY



Beda Johnson

The Development Authority of Columbia County and the Columbia County Convention & Visitor's Bureau (CVB) jointly received a grant from the Georgia Department of Economic Development in the amount of \$14,419 to help the two organizations combine their marketing efforts through

the website www.choosecolumbiacounty.com. The grant will help fund a roughly \$30,000 initiative to market Columbia County. The ChooseColumbiaCounty.com will be an informative one-stop-shopping website for both the prospective business and the prospective tourists as does the State's nationally renowned economic development website - www.georgia.org. The grant funds will also be used to assist the CVB in its development and distribution of a new and enhanced Columbia County Visitor's Guide that will be distributed to hundreds of visitor centers and tourist stops throughout the southeast.

RECYCLE PHONE DIRECTORIES

Keep Columbia County Beautiful has placed two recycling bins for the public to recycle old telephone books. One bin is located in the front parking lot of the Evans Government Center at 630 Ronald Reagan Drive and the other is in front of the Columbia County Water Utility Division at 4325 Evans-to-Locks Road. These bins will be available for drop-off until September 15th.

For more information, please call (706) 312-7191.

Screen On The Green
September 9, 16 and 23
COLUMBIA COUNTY AMPHITHEATER
 Located Adjacent to the Library at 720 N. Belair Road in Evans
(706) 312-7194

Clapperboards shown:
 - **The Wizard of Oz** (G rating)
 - **Monsters, Inc.** (G rating)
 - **Goonies** (PG rating)

Admission: \$1 Per Person

A Series of Three Family Movies Presented on a 25'x36' Inflatable Screen. Families are invited to bring Blankets, Lawn Chairs and Picnic Baskets. Alcohol is not allowed.